

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 COME-00 DOTE-00 EB-11 FMC-04 CG-00

COA-02 DLOS-06 SWF-02 DRC-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EA-11

FEA-02 /136 W

----- 119093

R 191225Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6290

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 0889

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN ETRD PFOR PINT TD PN US

SUBJECT: TRINIDAD STUDYING PROPOSED PANAMA CANAL TOLL INCREASE

REF: STATE 49678

1. POLLARD MOORE, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PORT CONTRACTORS LTD., TOLD EMBOFFS APRIL 17 THAT GOTT HAS ASKED HIM TO ASSEMBLE DATA AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRINIDADIAN RESPONSE TO SCCN RESOLUTION WHICH REQUESTED LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES TO SUBMIT TO USG THEIR VIEWS ON PROPOSED TOLL INCREASE (REFTEL). PORT CONTRACTORS LTD. IS 51 PERCENT OWNED BY THE GOTT AND CONDUCTS THE OPERATION OF THE PORT IN PORT OF SPAIN. MOORE SAID THAT HIS SURVEY OF SHIPPING IN PORT OF SPAIN SHOWED THAT ONLY EIGHT PERCENT OF TRINIDAD'S MERCHANDISE IMPORTS COME THROUGH THE CANAL, AND VIRTUALLY NO MERCHANDISE EXPORTS ARE ROUTED THAT DIRECTION. THESE IMPORTS ARE LARGELY CONSUMER ITEMS FROM JAPAN, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND. ON THE OTHER HAND, ACCORDING TO THE OAS DATA, SHIPS BOUND TO AND FROM TRINIDAD ARE AMONG THE LARGEST HEMISPHERIC USERS OF THE CANAL. MOORE SAID THIS TRAFFIC MUST REPRESENT OIL TANKERS (WHICH DO NOT CALL AT PORT OF SPAIN), SERVING TRINIDADIAN REFINERIES BY

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BRINGING CRUDE FROM ECUADOR (AND POSSIBLY INDONESIA), AND CARRYING

REFINED PRODUCTS TO THE WEST COAST OF THE UNITED STATES.

2. MOORE SAID THAT HIS TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS INDICATE THAT THE PROPOSED TOLL INCREASE WOULD HAVE VERY LITTLE EFFECT ON TRINIDAD. IN THE CASE OF TANKERS, THE GOTT RECEIVES PROCESSING FEES AND A REFINERY THROUGHPUT TAX ON PETROLEUM PROCESSED IN TRINIDAD, AND THESE RECEIPTS PRESUMABLY WOULD NOT BE ALTERED SIGNIFICANTLY BY HIGHER FREIGHT RATES OR CANAL TOLLS. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOTT IS VERY SENSITIVE TO ANY RETAIL PRICE INCREASES AND POINTED OUT THAT SOME OF THE CONSUMER ITEMS BROUGHT THROUGH THE CANAL (BUTTER AND CHEESE FROM NEW ZEALAND, FOR EXAMPLE) ARE SUBJECT TO GOTT MAXIMUM PRICE CONTROLS. THUS THE GOTT MIGHT REACT ADVERSELY TO THE PROSPECT THAT EVEN A SMALL PORTION OF TRINIDAD'S COMMERCE WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THE TOLL INCREASE. IN PASSING, MOORE SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY WAS VERY IMPRESSED BY THE CASE MADE BY THE CANAL COMPANY FOR A TOLL INCREASE, AND THAT HIS IMPRESSION WOULD BE REFLECTED IN HIS REPORT TO THE GOTT.

MILLER

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